

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- 1) Understand how a judge becomes a Supreme Court Justice
- 2) Know that the Supreme Court is the highest court in the country
- 3) Understand how the justices get cases and how they make decisions.
- 4) Understand the hierarchy of the federal court system
- 5) Know a few landmark Supreme Court Cases
- 6) Understand that our government has a system of checks and balances

Suggested Activities

- 1) **Mock Trial.** Have pairs of students research a case that is in the process of going through our judicial branch. Your Supreme Courts will go through the cases given to them and decide which ones they want to hear. The pair of students that turned in the case will present it to the Supreme Court that your students have created (You may have rotating justices, depending on whether or not one of the already appointed justices is involved in the case). Have all students write a summary of the cases they have heard, what the 'Supreme Court' decision was in your classroom, and what their own decision is.
- 2) **Historical Journal.** Ask each student to research an historical Supreme Court decision that they find interesting. Ask each student to keep a journal as though they lived during the time that the case was tried. What was their life like? Were they supportive of the decision? How did the Supreme Court decision change their lives?

Test

True/False and Multiple Choice:

- 1) There are 12 justices on the Supreme Court
- 2) The Supreme Court does not have a jury Court
- 3) There are three levels of federal courts in the Judicial Branch Court ____T ____ F
- 4) By law, the Supreme Court has to hear every case that comes to them. Court ____T ____ F
- 5) Congress has the power to impeach Supreme Court Justices Court ____T ____ F
- 6) The Supreme Court
 - (a) Has nine justices
 - (b) Is the highest court in our country
 - (c) Decides on laws that affect our whole country
 - (d) All of the above
- 7) Federal or national courts hear cases between
 - (a) People from different states
 - (b) Two or more states
 - (c) Two neighbors
 - (d) a. and b. only
- 8) Which of the following was not an important Supreme Court cases?
 - (a) Brown vs. Board of Education
 - (b) Reagan vs. Clinton
 - (c) Miranda vs. Arizona
 - (d) Gore vs. Bush
- 9) How does our government ensure that no one branch of government becomes too powerful?
 - (a) Checks and balances
 - (b) Constant surveillance
 - (c) Impeachment
 - (d) Supreme court decisions
- 10) The main job of the Judicial Branch is to
 - (a) Question the president's actions
 - (b) Declare war
 - (c) Interpret our country's laws
 - (d) Find juries for important trials

Answers: 1F, 2T, 3T, 4F, 5T, 6D, 7D, 8B, 9A, 10C

Vocabulary

Appeal – the request for a higher authority to change a previous decision

Checks and balances – Our government's system that ensures that no one branch of government has too much power

Chief justice – the judge that presides over the Supreme Court

Constitution – The document that outlines the laws of our country

Court of appeals – The second level of federal courts that can overturn the decision of a district court

Criminal case – a court case where a jury decides whether someone has committed a crime

District court – the first level of federal courts where a case is heard

executive orders – the written orders of the President

Federal courts – The courts belonging to our Judicial Branch

Jury – Citizens who listen to a court case and decide who is right

Justice – A Supreme Court judge

Laws – rules that are adopted by our government

Supreme Court – the highest court in the United States

Treaty – a written agreement between two or more countries that describes how the countries should treat each other

Trial court – a court in which a case is first decided

